

BRIEFS

FACILITIES USAGE CONSULT AVAILABLE

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — In light of the U.S. Supreme Court's June 26 decision legalizing same sex marriage nationwide, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) is offering a Facilities Usage Policy consultation to Southern Baptist churches in friendly cooperation with the convention. The consultation includes an in-house visit from trained MBCB personnel and written materials. There is no charge for the consultation. For more information or to schedule a consultation, call the MBCB Office of Church Growth at (601) 292-3310, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 310. E-mail: facilitiespolicy@mbcb.org.

NAMB SETTLES INJURY LAWSUIT

BOZEMAN, Mont. (BP) — A Montana judge's summary judgment ruling has led to a \$20 million insurance payment in a quadriplegic lawsuit against the North American Mission Board (NAMB) stemming from a 2009 auto accident. Jeremy Vangsnes, who was 21 at the time of the July 2009 accident, was traveling with two of his brothers, Dan, then 24, and Ryan, then 19, in an SUV driven by Scott Minear, 20. The rollover crash, which left Jeremy Vangsnes paralyzed and with a brain injury, occurred on Interstate 90 near Belgrade, Mt. The four men were based at Yellowstone National Park as part of a NAMB 10-week summer resort missions program.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD HOOD FEELING HEAT

NASHVILLE, Tn. (BP and local reports) — Planned Parenthood is lying in defense of its program that sells organs and other parts of aborted babies through its nearly 70 U.S. clinics, said a nonprofit medical watchdog group that revealed the program in an undercover investigation of the nation's largest abortion provider. The Center for Medical Progress said Planned Parenthood's claims of gaining patient consent, not generating monetary profit, and following the law are all false. Mississippi's lone abortion clinic, in Jackson, is not affiliated with Planned Parenthood.

Church remembers Marine

Serviceman 'always had his Bible.'

WOODSTOCK, Ga. (BP and local reports) — A single Marine flag stood in place at the orchestra chair where Skip Wells played the clarinet for many years at First Church in Woodstock, Ga.

Members of the Atlanta-area church took time last Sunday to pray for the families of Lance Cpl. Skip Wells, 21, and four other servicemen killed by a gunman who attacked a military recruitment office and another military facility July 16 a little more than an hour away in Chattanooga, Tn.

"As we held hands and prayed for his family, I lost it," Callie Jones wrote in a Facebook post accompanying a picture of the orchestra and Wells' family.

She included a prayer, "Heavenly Father please comfort Skip's momma and the other four mommas that lost their baby on Thursday[.]"

Wes Cantrell, the church's young adult pastor, tweeted a picture of the stage as well, commenting, "The Marine flag took the place of Lane Corporal



Wells was a 2012 graduate of Sprayberry High School who attended Georgia Southern University for a time before he "felt a calling to serve — in the Marines," family spokesman Andy Kingery told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. "He got out of boot camp about a year ago and was doing what was asked

of him. ...He understood the risk he was taking by putting on a uniform, and Skip died doing what he chose to do."

Those who died with Wells were:

■ Gunnery Sgt. Thomas J. Sullivan, a two-time Purple Heart recipient from Hampden, Ma.

■ Sgt. Carson A. Holmquist, of Polk, Wi.

■ Staff Sgt. David A. Wyatt of Burke, N.C.

■ U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Randall Smith, originally of Paulding, Oh., who was seriously wounded in the attack and died from his wounds July 18. He had been living in the north Georgia town of Rossville with his wife and three young daughters.

see MARINE on p. 7

Denominations affirm, struggle with U.S. Supreme Court ruling

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — At least three mainline Protestant denominations have affirmed the U.S. Supreme Court's nationwide legalization of same sex marriage, and others say they are divided on the issue.

Also, a new Associated Press (AP) poll suggests decreased support for same sex marriage among Americans generally, and a watchdog group that monitors mainline bodies said homosexual-affirming denominations are more liberal regarding marriage than even the culture at large.

"By and large, [mainline denominations] have been

more liberal than the culture in compromising their sexual standards before the country itself compromised its laws on marriage," said Mark Tooley, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, a Washington, D.C. think tank that is described on its web site as "a voice for transparency, for renewal, and for Christian orthodoxy."

Average church members in mainline denominations are "close to where the nation is as a whole" on same sex marriage, Tooley told Baptist Press, but the governing bodies of those denominations are "certainly

much more liberal than the country is."

The AP poll, conducted in conjunction with the German market research organization GfK, found 42% of Americans favor legalized same sex marriage, down from 48% in April. The 1,004 adults polled were almost evenly split on whether local government officials with religious objections should be required to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, AP reported.

A majority of those polled (56%) said it is more important for the government to protect religious liberty than

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Our 'other' summer missionaries

Mississippi Baptists have been all over the globe this summer, spreading the Gospel and displaying their willingness to follow the Lord's lead in their lives while cementing their commitment to important Kingdom work. There's a unique group of summer missionaries within the larger group, however, who often get overlooked and who also deserve our prayers and recognition for their Kingdom service.

The young men and women who staff our Mississippi Baptist camps for the summer season are just as important as the summer missionaries we commission to faraway lands. Their mission is the same: to lead people (in this case, our precious children) to a saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and ensure that their young feet are firmly placed on a lifelong path of discipleship and Christian service.

Camp work is not for the faint of heart. It gets hot and hectic at Mississippi Baptists' encampments — Central Hills Retreat in the woods outside Kosciusko, and Garaywa Camp and Conference Center in the woods of Clinton.

Their efforts will not be in vain, as the Lord will raise up many leaders from the ranks of the campers influenced by these Godly summer staffers. Surely many of the staffers, too, will be our future leaders.

Morris Chapman, retired former president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) executive committee in Nashville, a former two-time SBC president, and a native of Kosciusko, points to his days as a youngster at Camp Garaywa, as it was then named, as some of the most influential times he experienced in his spiritual development and a key factor in his subsequent decision to answer the Lord's call into full-time ministry.

Chapman's story is only one among many, surely numbering in the thousands since Mississippi Baptists began their camping program in 1947. Like our other summer missionaries, we need to be praying for these faithful young men and women as they work at our encampments and prepare both themselves and others for lifetimes of Christian ministry.

To God be the glory for all they accomplish in His name.

Profiting from dead babies

Last week, an explosive undercover video went viral online. The video shows Deborah Nucatola, senior director of medical services in the national office of Planned Parenthood, explaining how Planned Parenthood sells the parts of aborted, unborn children. This woman is not some rogue, fringe, local employee who is out of line with the national protocol. She is a physician and the person responsible for setting, implementing, and promoting such activity throughout the national organization.

This revelation of Planned Parenthood's atrocious behavior is not new. There have been reports of such activity for years, but this is the first time we've seen it discussed so explicitly by someone so high in the organization. What makes this reprehensible behavior even worse is the reality that Planned Parenthood receives hundreds of millions of dollars in government subsidies, provided through our taxes.

Yes, you and I pay for Planned Parenthood to increase their own profits through harvesting babies' body parts.

In the video, Nucatola can be heard casually explaining how the babies are dismembered so that their body parts can be successfully harvested. She cavalierly explains how the doctor crushes the "less valuable" parts of the baby's body to preserve the "more valuable" parts of the baby's body. She quickly explains how pricing is set by demand and talks about the value of an aborted baby's liver, all in between bites of her own lunch.

There have been different reactions to this video. Some do not even want to watch it. Many have been rightly outraged at the revelations.

There is another current event that has made many people concerned. While news of the abortion video went largely uncovered in national media, most attention was on what many considered to be a bad deal with Iran. Our country has negotiated a deal with Iran that many believe will eventually allow this dangerous country to obtain nuclear weapons that could kill thousands, and many Americans are outraged.

There is no doubt that a nuclear Iran would be destabilizing politically and would pose deadly consequences, but we spend so much time worrying about the enemies "over there" that we have ignored the enemy much closer to home. We have neglected to be sufficiently worried about a far more dan-



Guest opinion
with Chas Rowland

gerous deal that was struck with a far more deadly organization than Iran.

Our government has struck a deal with Planned Parenthood that has facilitated the murder of over 30 million American citizens. We fret over the threat of our government facilitating a deal that could hypothetically lead to the death of thousands, while millions of babies are slaughtered silently.

Iran is not our greatest danger, for we have killed more babies with a smile and medical insurance than I can ever could with a bomb. Our greatest enemy has been identified, and it is ourselves.

There are more disturbing details in the video that could be discussed, but there is one other glaring hypocrisy. Because of the need to respect and protect an individual's sexual liberty, the U.S. Supreme Court recently decided to redefine the definition of marriage that has stood for thousands of years.

This same nation that claims to value an individual's rights has refused to protect the rights of a helpless baby in a mother's womb. Our nation has actively paid an organization to deprive life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to millions of people. We have done it in the most disgusting way imaginable, and for profit.

How can we maintain such a ridiculous hypocrisy? Our government is willing to turn thousands of years of human society upside down in order to protect an individual's "civil rights," and yet these atrocious, murderous, abortion practices are allowed to continue.

It is time for abortion to end. Surely a society that claims to value every one's individual liberties can protect the civil liberties of the most vulnerable among us.

Rowland is pastor of Lovina Church, Vicksburg, and currently serves as vice-president of the trustees of the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.



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Judges: GuideStone must follow contraception mandate

WASHINGTON (BP) — GuideStone Financial Resources and the ministries it serves must abide by the Obama administration's abortion/contraception mandate or pay crushing fines, a federal appeals court ruled July 14.

A three-judge panel of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver declined to grant an injunction blocking enforcement of the rule, rejecting arguments by GuideStone and a host of other religious non-profit organizations that the controversial mandate and its accommodation for such entities violate their religious freedom.

The mandate requires employers to provide not only contraceptives for their workers but drugs and devices that can potentially cause abortions.

GuideStone, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) health and financial benefits entity, and its attorneys are considering an appeal to the full 10th Circuit Court or to the U.S. Supreme Court, GuideStone said in a news release.

The decision is "a setback" but "not the final outcome," GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said in the release. "This is a disappointing decision, for both religious liberty and for the sanctity of life. This is a day for all of us to bombard the Throne of Grace with petitions for a favorable outcome on appeal, for strength of resolve, for the unborn in this country and for all of our leaders, so many of whom have turned their back on the founding principles of this country."

SBC President Ronnie Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, joined Hawkins in calling for prayerful determination. "This decision shows the deep need for us not just to pray, but to further resolve together that we will go forward standing for religious liberty and for the sanctity of human life unrelentingly."

"May God give to Dr. O.S. Hawkins, to GuideStone, and to others, the wisdom and strength to do what is necessary to continue in this worthy pursuit."

SBC Executive Committee President Frank S. Page said in Nashville, "We join with Dr. O.S. Hawkins and the trustees and staff of GuideStone in expressing our deep displeasure at this ruling. It is a sad day when the government refuses to recognize the heartfelt beliefs and conscience of God's people."

"It is indicative of the overreach of our judicial system which has become customary in the 21st-century. We will not give up this fight."

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville, called it a disappointing ruling "that reveals the instincts of a state-established religion — one that seeks to use the law as a means to steamroll the conscience and

stamp out opposition. This decision forces a choice between obedience to God and compliance with the regulatory state. We must stand with conscience."

The 10th Circuit opinion came in three combined cases that included not only GuideStone as a party but two Southern Baptist-affiliated schools — Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Ga., and Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee — and Little Sisters of the Poor, a Roman Catholic order of nuns in Denver.

The loss by GuideStone and its allies is the latest in a series of defeats at the federal appellate level for religious organizations that object to the abortion/contraception mandate. In other recent rulings:

■ The Seventh Circuit Court in Chicago refused July 1 to grant Wheaton College, an evangelical Christian school in suburban Chicago, an injunction against the rule while its case proceeds.

■ The Fifth Circuit Court in New Orleans on June 22 declined a request for an injunction from two Southern Baptist-affiliated schools — East Texas Baptist University in Marshall and Houston Baptist University in Houston — and Westminster Theological Seminary in Glenside, Pa.

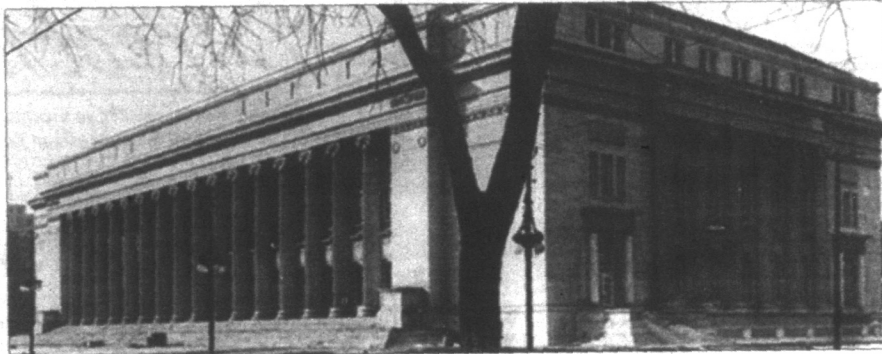
The Texas Baptist universities and Westminster Seminary have since appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Their July 8 petition brought to five the number of appeals to the high court in decisions against nonprofits.

Though federal appeals courts have rebuffed nonprofits that oppose the mandate, the Supreme Court has blocked such actions by appellate panels six consecutive times, according to the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. In two of those orders this year, the high court vacated appeals court rulings and ordered the circuits to reconsider their decisions in light of the justices' 2014 ruling in support of the religious freedom of for-profit companies regarding the mandate.

In June 2014, the Supreme Court upheld objections against the mandate by "closely held," for-profit companies, such as family owned businesses. The justices ruled in favor of Hobby Lobby, the nationwide retail chain owned by evangelical Christians, and Conestoga Wood Specialties, a Pennsylvania cabinet-making company owned by pro-life Mennonites.

The federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued the rule in question to help implement the 2010 health care law. The regulation requires coverage of federally approved contraceptives, including the intrauterine device (IUD) and such drugs as Plan B, the "morning-after" pill.

Both the IUD and "morning-after" pill possess post-fertilization mechanisms that potentially can cause abortions by prevent-



10TH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS, DENVER, CO.



"This is a disappointing decision, for both religious liberty and for the sanctity of life. This is a day for all of us to bombard the Throne of Grace with petitions for a favorable outcome on appeal, for strength of resolve, for the unborn in this country and for all of our leaders, so many of whom have turned their back on the founding principles of this country."

**O.S. Hawkins
GuideStone President**

ing implantation of tiny embryos. The rule also covers "ella," which — in a fashion similar to the abortion drug RU 486 — can act even after implantation to end the life of the child.

HHS provided an exemption to the rule, which was first proposed in August 2011, for churches and their auxiliaries but did not extend it to non-church-related, nonprofit organizations that object. It issued an accommodation for religious nonprofits, but many of those ministries or institutions have found it unacceptable.

In its latest version announced July 10, HHS finalized a rule, similar to one offered in August 2014, that enables non-profit religious organizations to notify HHS in writing of their religious objections. In response, the federal government will notify the insurer

or a third-party administrator it is responsible for providing employees of the nonprofit with payments to cover the services.

Religious liberty and pro-life advocates still find the rule woefully lacking, contending it is basically an accounting gimmick that turns the religious organizations into channels through which coverage for contraceptives and potentially abortion-causing drugs is provided.

In its July 14 opinion, the 10th Circuit panel found unconvincing the arguments of GuideStone and its allies that the HHS accommodation would still make them complicit in providing abortifacient or contraceptive coverage.

"Having to file paperwork or otherwise register a religious objection, even if one disagrees with the ultimate aim of the law at issue, does not alone substantially burden religious exercise," Judge Scott Matheson wrote for the panel.

HHS has made opting out of the requirement "at least as easy as obtaining a parade permit, filing a simple tax form, or registering to vote — in other words, a routine, brief administrative task," Matheson wrote. "Opting out ensures they will play no part in the provision of contraceptive coverage, prohibits [third-party administrators] and health insurance issuers from sharing the costs of providing coverage with them, and requires notice to employees that they do not administer or fund contraceptive services."

Mark Rienzi, lead attorney for GuideStone and its co-plaintiffs, said the 10th Circuit's decision "leaves in place the federal government's aggressive, discriminatory, and unnecessary attack

on the core religious beliefs of private religious ministries."

"The government does not need to take over a church benefits plan to provide abortion-inducing drugs — the most powerful government in the world can obviously distribute drugs without co-opting religious institutions and their health plans," said Rienzi, senior counsel for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty in Washington, D.C., in the GuideStone release.

The lawsuit marks the first time GuideStone has sued the federal government. Truett-McConnell College and Reaching Souls International — both participants in GuideStone's health plans — joined the SBC entity in its suit.

Truett-McConnell College is affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention, and Reaching Souls is an Oklahoma City-based missions organization that trains Africans to reach their continent with the Gospel of Christ.

Three other SBC entities — the ERLC, International Mission Board in Richmond, Va., and Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. — filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of GuideStone's request for a preliminary injunction.

GuideStone, which is based in Dallas, serves not only churches but missions organizations, schools, hospitals, and other ministries. In addition to health and other insurance coverage, GuideStone also offers retirement, investment management, property and casualty coverage, and other services.

Dallas law firm Locke Lord LLP joined the Becket Fund in filing the lawsuit for GuideStone and its co-plaintiffs.

I'm not sure, but I don't believe I know of one person who likes waiting. There's an old cliché statement that the military uses a great deal that says, "Hurry Up and Wait." It's describing the troops that are marched from one place to another, or one event to another, only to get there quickly and wait and wait for what is going to happen next.

We certainly live in a world that has been conditioned not to wait on anything. We have fast, almost immediate, communication. You can be next door or on the next continent and e-mail, texting, Instagram, and even the old fashioned phone call is just seconds away and you're connected. Heaven forbid that any of us should have to wait more than about sixty seconds on anything we want or anything that comes to our mind. We want fast food, quick checkout, and instant gratification for almost anything we can think of.

To wait is absurd and, in the minds of many, evil. Although "wait" is a four letter word, it is not a bad four letter word. In the closing chapter of Luke's Gospel, he tells that Jesus instructed His disciples to go back to Jerusalem and wait (24:49). Can you imagine Jesus sending out a group text message to all of us with the clear instructions to go to a spot and wait? Wait? You've got to be kidding!

Our world has got to be on the go, turning buttons, punching out communications, or just staying busy. We are in a hurry. In fact, for us, it's a hurry on steroids. We live our lives wanting what we want, when we want



The Waiting Room

it, or even as we might prefer having it available before we want it. Regardless of whether it's wealth or health, information or inspiration, gas, groceries, intelligence, or weight loss, we want it right now.

People may not have had computers in biblical days, but they were busy then, too. It was to those folks who thought that they needed to be active — maybe not driving at seventy miles an hour but at least walking at a hefty pace — that Jesus said, "Go back to Jerusalem and wait." I know the rest of the verse says wait "until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). In our revved-up, hurry-up world, we have lost sight of the fact that there are some things that cannot be rushed.

Hardly a week goes by that someone doesn't encourage me to keep a sermon

short, either implying or directly saying, "Let's get out of here." Whether you have the spiritual wisdom to know it or not, worship can't be rushed up and packaged in increments of nanoseconds. Some things cannot be hurried. Now, I am fully aware there are some things that are dragged out too long and worship leaders, whether leading the music or preaching the sermon, need to be mindful of the limitations that exist in the human experience. However, it is true that some things just take some meaningful time.

Regardless of the advancements in medical technology and all the amazing things that are done with the application of technology in every area of life, it still takes nine months for a baby to develop to term in the mother's womb. It was nine months when my great-

grandmother was born. It was nine months when my brothers and I were born. It was nine months for each of our children and grandchildren and it will stay nine months for this significant event to take place.

Even after the baby arrives, it is impossible to force them to grow up faster than nature allows. There are wonderful developmental stages that people move through, and they have purpose and productivity and you simply have to wait for some of the stages to take place in order for growth to be maximized.

I have known of men who came to know Christ as Savior, born into the family of God, and only weeks or a few months later were called to a church to be pastor or a church wants to make them a deacon. The Apostle Paul cautions us about setting people apart that are novices. Waiting on the Lord is not a bad thing.

The old saying that good things come to those who wait has validity even in our day. When you wait on the Lord, there is strength that comes. Oftentimes there is stability that comes. At times there is sensitivity that comes. Maybe it would be helpful for all of us to stop for a moment, evaluate what is going on in our lives in the busy-ness of our world, and ask God what He would have us to do to help us understand the ways in which He would have us to wait and surrender our wills to Him saying, "Yes, Lord Jesus, I will wait on You."

Wait on Him. You will be glad you did.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Vacation Bible School

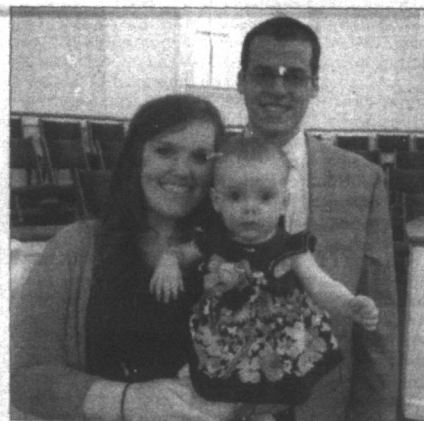


WASHINGTON CHURCH, NATCHEZ: July 6 – 10; enrollment high, 61.



CALVARY CHURCH, NEWTON: June 28 – July 1; Pon Gilstrap, pastor.

Staff Changes



INGOMAR CHURCH, UNION COUNTY ASSOCIATION, has called Nathan Rogers as minister of students. Rogers is from Fulton and he and his wife Jenna are 2014 graduates of Blue Mountain College. They are shown with daughter Naomi.



BETHANY CHURCH, PRENTISS, has called Lee Faler as pastor. His first Sunday was June 7. He is shown with his wife Jordan and son Rankin.

What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

July 23, 2015

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

Pray this day for...

July 24 – August 13, 2015

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age..." Titus 2:11-12 (ESV)

Pray for: **Clay & Jerl Stegall**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through strategy coordination.

Pray for: **Jeanette Taylor**, missionary ministering to Southeast Asian Peoples through regional support.

Pray for: **Karl & Peggy Wallace**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through mission administration, church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **David & Regina White**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through church planting, church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Floyd & Sylvia Wingo**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through strategy coordination.

Pray for: **Janna Smith**, missionary ministering to American Peoples/Mexico through church planting.

Pray for: **Thomas Smith**, missionary ministering to American Peoples/Panama through regional office support.

Pray for: **Charles & Shannon Worthy**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples through community outreach.

Pray for: **James & Mary Adair**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through church planting, church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Bethany Allen**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through community outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Richard & Martha Beal**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through financial administration, church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **David & Laurie Bledsoe**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Kaye Brooks**, missionary ministering to American Peoples through church planting.

Pray for: **Donald & Donna Brown**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples through church planting, church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Karen Brown**, missionary ministering to American Peoples through nursing.

Pray for: **John & Claudia Brown**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Matthew Burks**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through evangelism.

Pray for: **David & Pamela Carlton**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through theological education, church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Richard & Wanda Clark**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples through strategy coordination.

Pray for: **Rebekah Clark**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through youth evangelism.

Pray for: **Cindy Demars**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.

The IMB missionaries listed in the HouseTops prayer calendar are currently active in 2-4 year terms or in career service.

GROWING CHURCHES¹⁵

Sponsored by MS Baptist Convention & North MS Baptist Association

Growing Churches Conference

Friday and Saturday, August 7th and 8th, 2015

Harrisburg Baptist Church

4675 Cliff Gookin Blvd

Tupelo, MS 38801

For more information, please call the Lee County Baptist Association 662.566.1700 or log on to www.growingchurches.info

OR
contact the Discipleship/Family Ministry Dept. of the MBCB at 800-748-1651, Ext. 283, or 601-292-3283



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44th ANNUAL

CHURCH LIBRARY MINISTRY CONFERENCE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, CORINTH, MS
OCTOBER 2-3, 2015

Registration Deadline: September 18, 2015

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1. Request a CLM Newsletter be sent to you.
2. Print registration form from our Web site and mail it in.
3. Register on-line.

For more information contact Communication Services
at the MBCB at 800-748-1651, Ext. 378,
or 601-292-3378.

	Comp. Project	Other	Total
FBC ISOLA	4,544.60	5,773.92	10,318.52
FBC LOUISE	250.00	-	250.00
GOLDEN LAKE	2,239.00	942.00	3,181.00
SILVER CITY	7,262.38	804.71	8,067.09
HUMPHREYS TOWN	43,942.18	39,692.58	83,634.76
ITAWAMBA	1,536.00	1,000.00	2,536.00
ANTIOCH	300.00	-	300.00
RETHANY	1,122.66	25.00	1,147.66
OWENS	3,250.25	3,012.00	6,262.25
DOVER	273.00	250.00	523.00
EVERGREEN	12,003.54	6,357.02	18,360.56
FBC FULLTON	-	-	-

KIRKLAND	2,820.00	4,364.00	7,184.00
LANE AND	300.00	2,284.00	2,584.00
MORNING VIEW	450.00	485.00	935.00
NEW HOME	1,200.00	815.00	2,015.00
POULAR SPRINGS	1,918.00	717.00	2,635.00
PROVIDENCE	1,720.00	5,957.19	7,677.19
SALEM	1,020.84	1,126.26	2,147.10
SILCOIL	7,067.19	3,465.00	10,532.19
TRINITY	20,137.32	10,377.86	30,515.18
TAWAMBA Total	56,882.42	41,375.53	98,257.95
JACKSON	29,538.02	38,529.34	68,067.36
ARLINGTON HGTS			

BELLE FOUNTAIN	13,895.84	6,627.76	22,721.72
BELLEVUE	1,540.54	2,564.00	3,344.54
CAMBRIDGE	6,150.54	6,538.00	9,798.54
EAST MOSS POINT	3,539.00	6,212.00	9,751.00
ELLSMERE	750.01	1,465.00	2,215.01
ESCAMANUELE	5,631.49	7,387.12	13,018.61
ESCATAWPA	11,771.93	8,780.93	20,552.86
FBI GAITHER	36,245.63	37,872.99	74,118.62
FBI HELENA	5,321.00	10,646.00	15,967.00
FBI JESSUP	15,289.42	25,452.64	40,742.06
FBI KANSAS CITY	9,999.96	2,897.66	12,897.62
FBI OCEAN SPRINGS	46,700.03	42,515.90	89,215.93
FBI PASCAGOULA	2,724.58	49,000.44	51,725.02
FORT BAYOU	1,308.34	..	1,308.34

FOUR MILE CREEK	1,200.00	5,180.00	6,380.00
FRANKLIN CREEK	1,200.00	5,180.00	6,380.00
FRED CO. CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP	584.36	1,446.04	2,030.40
GRACELAND	1,136.49	1,935.49	3,071.98
HURLEY	9,090.27	10,610.66	19,700.93
1000 S. CALS AVENUE	17,059.77	16,059.77	33,119.54
KOSKOE AVE.	1,696.00	1,629.00	3,325.00
LAURE	697.00	1,292.00	1,989.00
LENOXVIEW BLVD.	6,043.21	3,493.21	9,536.42
LILLY CREEK ROAD	1,539.00	494.39	2,033.39
MAGNOLIA	1,568.00	1,414.25	2,982.25
MARTIN BLUFF	1,723.81	2,564.50	4,288.31
MCCLELLAN ROAD	23.00	23.00	46.00
NEWARK	584.00	609.33	1,193.33

PARKWAY	2,243.10	2,243.10	5.46
PINE LAKE	4,995.42	4,951.42	4.48
POWDERMINE	125.00		0.00
RAMSAY HILLS	209.60	209.61	0.01
RED CREEK UNION	1,353.00	1,770.00	417.00
RIDGELAND HEIGHTS	19,333.43	37,090.00	17,756.57
ROSEBUD	8,722.96	6,872.24	15.60
TEMPLE	8,280.95	3,738.31	12.06
WAXIE	45,577.53	22,421.00	67.79
WYOMING	5,500.53	1,742.89	6.88
JACKSON TOTAL	337,810.57	360,573.68	632.11
JASPER			
WYOMING	8,894.89	3,615.00	12.50

RAY SPRINGS	27,534.00	58,788.35	86.1%
BETHANY	967.00	1,214.00	79.3%
WILKINSON	686.68	1,171.68	58.6%
CORINTH	1,696.27	4,036.41	57.2%
DECADAR	100.00	33.00	4.0%
EDON	16,904.75	4,773.46	28.2%
WILSON	120.00	1,650.00	7.3%
FAIR RIDGE	400.00	100.00	5.0%
FBC MOSS	1,670.58	2,251.48	34.9%
FBC ROSE HILL	150.00	1,400.00	10.7%
FERNBUSH	4,371.70	2,431.40	55.6%
HEIDELBERG	2,486.15	2,330.00	47.7%
LAKE COMB	1,610.00	2,971.00	43.8%
LAKEVIEW	1,000.00	1,116.00	91.4%

LOUIR	2,955.00	3,923.00	6.8%
MONTROSE	2,431.18	4,097.00	6.5%
NEO	6,234.50	4,026.40	6.5%
NEW BEGINNINGS	1,452.71		
NEW FELLOWSHIP	1,398.84	3,988.84	5.3%
SHADY GROVE FIRST	308.12	205.40	4.4%
TRINITY	1,274.58	2,625.00	2.6%
UNION SEMINARY	2,004.00	501.00	1.5%
JAPER Total	81,452.25	107,636.76	189.1%

JONES			
BETHEL	300.00	505.00	8.0%
BETHLEHEM	2,435.00	5,000.00	7.4%
BETHLEHEM	880.00	1,000.00	1.1%

COUNTY LINE	7,264.68	7,835.95	15.1
EASTVIEW	5,904.00	4,853.40	10.7
EMMAUS REL	2,480.00	2,943.00	5.4
FARLEED	9,113.07	5,188.43	18.4
FAITH	70.00	70.00	1.0
FBC BILLSVILLE	50,818.34	36,219.56	27.0
FBC LAUREL	136,905.63	80,745.65	81.0
FBC OVERT	1,277.44	1,576.50	2.8
FBC SHARON	18,632.90	19,050.00	37.6
FBC SOD	8,662.75	6,519.00	15.5
FELLOWSHIP	1,755.15	3,200.26	4.5
FREEDOM	9,000.00	5,200.00	14.2
FRIENDSHIP	1,923.11		1.9
	2,264.63	43,264.63	

GRACE	20,000.00	14,000.00	1,050.39	1.7
HARMONY	330.61	705.60		
HEBRON	5,250.00	8,997.00		14.4
LAURENCE HEIGHTS	3,000.00	3,505.00		5.7
HIGHLAND	33,814.06	26,129.88		60.1
HILL CREST		100.00		.5
INDIAN SPRINGS	1,943.22	3,886.57		68.8
JOURNEY CHURCH	42,452.38	25,773.05		58.5
LOWERY CREEK	25,424.85	5,111.46		30.3
MAQUILA	2,607.31	2,704.86		5.1
MOORE	8,800.00	2,292.14		5.3
MOORE MEMORIAL	17,855.00	14,983.00		32.8
MYRICK	4,212.89	1,203.68		2.9

WYCK OFFSHORE GROVE	8,638.19	2,295.00	85.10
PARK HAVEN	150.00	150.00	1.00
PATHWAY COMMUNITY		631.00	
WYCK OFFSHORE GROVE	900.00	2,118.00	9.00
PINE GROVE	5,245.22	4,220.00	9.40
PREVIEW	2,038.46	2,929.25	2.10
PLAINWAY	1,255.65	761.38	1.40
PLAINVIEW HOME	14,137.66	7,843.57	21.60
SALBIM HEIGHTS	9,000.00	1,095.00	1.00
SAND HILL	4,545.97	20,383.21	24.50
SANDSVILLE	21,768.63	17,791.53	20.00
SHELTON	8,544.00	4,669.00	13.00
SUMMERLAND	17,327.94	10,703.27	28.00

KALAPHOA	2,291.00	291.00	14.3
TRINITY	7,205.40	7,221.00	34.3
TUCKERS CROSSING	12,375.00	20,961.50	14.3
UNITY	1,200.00	2,191.94	3.4
WEST ELLISVILLE	12,767.00	16,198.11	21.3
WEST LAUREL	9,176.15	9,171.74	21.3
JONES Total	562,630.30	437,404.52	99.00
KEMPER			
BAY SPRINGS	2,237.40	458.00	2.6
BLACKWATER	2,351.00	3,286.15	2.6
CLARK SPRINGS	947.95		
CENTER RIDGE	1,000.00	2,250.00	1.4
CORINTH	1,389.00	2,015.00	1.4

UNION CITY	6,596.19	10,685.00	17.28
SALEM	9,607.80	2,698.00	2.78
SCOTCHBORO	521.80	907.80	0.17
UNION	2,874.00	7,006.00	0.93
UNION HILL	1,019.50	1,119.50	0.01
WALSHAM	530.63	3,484.00	0.04
WEST READER	605.58	235.16	0.00
REMAINDER	1,000.00	825.00	1.84
REMAINDER Total	21,715.05	18,917.61	60.00
LAFAYETTE		850.00	
"ASSOCIATION ANCHOR"		20,433.42	53.60
Total	33,343.68		

13	VALLEY	204.04	5,459.00	3.3
14	CLEAR CREEK	2,160.00	13,182.00	7.7
15	COLLEGE HILL HEIGHTS	9,944.63	4,771.59	14.4
16	DELAN	1,967.50	1,967.50	3.0
17	FATH	5,648.46	800.00	2.4
18	FRC ABBEVILLE	6,956.74	15,315.38	22.0
19	CLAY CREEK	50,523.53	125,009.94	270.0
20	NEW ELBERTH	2,947.05	2,947.05	4.5
21	NEW HOPE	874.24	1,915.24	2.8
22	NEW PROSPECT	12,249.10	3,893.10	16.6



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Just for the Record



UNION CHURCH, PEARL RIVER ASSOCIATION, held its GA coronation June 28. Brian Tatum, pastor.

In other Church News:

► **New Zion Church, Tylertown**, is presenting Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames July 26 - 28, 7 p.m. Not recommended for children under 9. Nursery available.

► The Warriors for Christ student ministry of **Parkway Church, Pascagoula**, went to Pensacola, Fla., to do missions ministry in the Brownsville community and to share in local churches July 15 - 18.



UNION HALL CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, celebrated the 4th of July with a picnic.



GRACEWOOD CHURCH, SOUTHAVEN, honored their seniors May 17. Shown are Blake Warren and Robert Beaugrand.

CLASSIFIEDS

POPULAR HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH, JACKSON, TENNESSEE IS SEARCHING FOR A FULL-TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF YOUTH AND RECREATION. We are seeking someone with at least a college degree and 2 years of experience in the area of youth and/or recreation. Send resume to Associate Pastor Search Committee, Popular Heights Baptist Church, 1980 Hollywood Drive, Jackson, Tennessee 38305, or freida@popularheights.com

NORRIS BOOKBINDING COMPANY, INC., OLD BIBLES REBOUND. Also, church bulletins and hymnals. For more information call 662-453-7424 or fax us at 662-455-6743.

HEIDELBERG STAINED GLASS, MERIDIAN, DESIGN, FABRICATION, REPAIR. heidelbergstainedglass.com or call 800-368-2705.

GATLINBURG RENTALS: Cabin \$95/night and Condo \$75/night. Contact: 832-822-0401 or E-mail: pdw4760@att.net for information and booking.

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CHURCH PEW UPHOLSTERY, FREE ESTIMATES. Davis Upholstery, Quitman, Miss., phone 601-776-6617.

STAINED GLASSWORKS, INC., serving MS & AL since 1992. Call 800-805-2970

WWW.SEBRENHOMEIMPROVEMENT.COM. Christian owned Don & Rita Sebrén. 601-992-2092. All home improvements, siding, energy efficient windows, metal & shingle roofs, screen & sunrooms, patio covers, decks, room additions, kitchen & bath upgrades.

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AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE VACATION CONDOS: Gulf Shores & Orange Beach, AL. Rent direct from Christian Family Owners, lowest prices on the Beach. www.gulfshorescondos.com, 205-556-0368, 205-752-1231, 251-752-2366.



Children from **UNION CHURCH, TYLERTOWN**, attended Kid's Camp at Central Hills Baptist Retreat. Shown are Kristen Fortenberry, Raini Sanford, Caroline Crawford, Samantha McNeil, and Alysa Broussard.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, WALNUT GROVE, held a baby dedication May 24. Shown are Chris & April Hogue, baby Jase, and big brother Wesley. Michael Harper, pastor.



A group from **GRIFFITH MEMORIAL CHURCH, JACKSON**, traveled to Memphis to the Peabody and Graceland May 28-29 as part of their Memphis in May emphasis.

MS POSITIONS

THE COLLABORATIVE MISSIONARY NETWORK, FORMERLY MARSHALL AND LAFAYETTE ASSOCIATIONS, IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS DIRECTOR. Send resumes to PO Box 422, Oxford, MS 38655 or lafaan@bellsouth.net.

MAGNOLIA BAPTIST CHURCH, LAUREL, IS SEEKING A MAN FOR THE POSITION OF FULL TIME OR BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please send resumes to Magnolia Baptist Church Pastor Search Committee at 383 Trace Road, Laurel, MS 39443 or email mbcpastorsearchcommittee@gmail.com. All resumes must be received no later than August 15, 2015.

SOUTH MCCOMB BAPTIST IS CURRENTLY SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER TO LEAD AND SERVE. Email all resumes to smbc01@bellsouth.net.

NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH IN FOXWORTH, MISSISSIPPI IS SEEKING AN ASSOCIATE PASTOR. If interested please submit resume to Associate pastor search committee, c/o New Hope Baptist Church, 508 New Hope Church Road, Foxworth, MS 39483.

GUNTER ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH IN FLORENCE, MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please submit resumes to Gunter Road Search Committee c/o Craig Dukes 2209 Woodland Place Florence, MS 39073 or rcdukes@bellsouth.net.

BAPTIST CHURCH IN THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE AREA IS SEEKING A FULL TIME CHRISTIAN, COMPASSIONATE CHURCH SECRETARY with a minimum of 1 year experience performing general office work. Excellent computer knowledge and telephone skills will be a plus. Resumes will ONLY be accepted by mail: Search Committee, 510 Lake Valley Drive, Starkville, MS 39759 or by e-mail: sr_parker@bellsouth.net

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SUMRALL, MISS. SEEKS FULL-TIME MINISTER TO CHILDREN/DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES. Bachelor's degree required (seminary preferred); prior experience working with children and in congregational or organizational setting required (experience as children's minister or equivalent preferred). Send resume and cover letter to office@fbcsumrall.org.

EASTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH IN INDIANOLA, MS IS IN SEARCH OF A FULL TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to Pastor Search Committee, P. O. Box 466, Indianola, Ms 38751 or e-mail to Shirley Betts at s_betts@bellsouth.net.

POSITION OPENING: PART-TIME CHURCH SECRETARY/BOOKKEEPER. New Sight Baptist Church, Brookhaven, MS. Please email resumes to newsightbc@cableone.com or mail to 629 Forest Trail NE, Brookhaven, MS 39601.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Concord Church, Calhoun Association:** 175th anniversary celebration, Aug. 30; program, 10 a.m., followed by lunch. Send any photos, memorabilia, family connections to the church at 12 County Road 235, Bruce, MS 38915.

► **Newhebron Church, Newhebron:** Revival, July 26 - 29; Sun., 10 a.m., followed by covered dish meal and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Danny Lanier, speaker; Mike Grenn, pastor.

► **Calvary Church, Carroll County:** Revival, July 26 - 29; Sun., 11 a.m.; 7 p.m. nightly; Jim Kelly, speaker; Wilton Neal, music.

► **Trinity Church, Laurel:** Revival, July 30 - Aug. 2; Thurs. - Fri., 7 p.m.; Rudy Jackson and Andy Boles, speakers; Sat., 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Donnie Guy speaking on prophecy; Sun., 10:30 a.m., followed by dinner

on the ground and 1 p.m.; Mike Routon, speaker. Joseph Walters and the sanctuary choir, music.

► **Center Ridge Church, Clarke County:** Revival, July 26 - 29; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Brad Sliger, speaker; Randy McLeod, music; Mack Carney, pastor.

► **McAdams Church, Attala Association:** Revival, July 26 - 29; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Donald Self, speaker.

► **Holmesville Church, Pike Association:** 127th homecoming, July 26; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; building dedication service, 2 p.m., followed by gospel groups and homemade ice cream. Dwayne Dunnaway, speaker; Lee Mathis, pastor.

► **Holly Springs Church,**

Brookhaven: Revival, July 24 - 26; Fri., 7 p.m.; Sat., community fish fry, 4 p.m. with children's activities and service, 7 p.m.; Sun., 10 a.m.; Matt Greer, speaker; Heartbeat Evangelistic Ministries, music.

► **New Henleyfield Church, Carriere:** Homecoming, July 26, 11 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch; Randall Pos, speaker.

► **Handsboro Church, Gulfport:** 141st anniversary and homecoming, July 26; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by fellowship meal; Ernie Sadler, speaker; Louis White, music.

► **Old Hebron Church, Newhebron:** Revival, July 26 - 29; homecoming services, Sun., 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds and afternoon service, with Jimmy Magee, speaker; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Rand Gardner, speaker; Richard Thames, music.

RULING

cont. from p. 1

homosexual rights. A full 59% said wedding-related business owners with religious objections should be allowed to refuse service to same sex couples.

Only 39% of those polled said they approve of the Supreme Court's ruling — a minority that includes the governing bodies of the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA) and the United Church of Christ (UCC), all of which have affirmed the high court's decision.

Less than a week after the court's June 26 ruling, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church amended the church's canons to allow marriage between people of the same gender, according to Episcopal News Service.

Leaders of the PCUSA said in a June 26 statement released by the denomination's office in Louisville, Ky., "The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is celebrating the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that same-gender couples have a constitutional right to marry nationwide, striking down bans in 14 states. Church leaders believe today's ruling is a step in the right direction as society's views have continued to change in recent years."

The United Church of Christ, which affirmed same sex marriage in 2005, issued a June 26 news release "celebrating the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court to affirm marriage equality for all people."

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) both released

"That legal test is coming for churches that have allowed their sanctuaries and chapels to be used for weddings of non-believers and people of other faith traditions. It is going to be very hard for them to demonstrate a consistently held theological belief based on the Scriptures if they've been willing to perform or host weddings for non-Christians."

Carmen Fowler LaBerge

president of the Presbyterian Lay Committee

statements expressing division within their fellowships regarding the Supreme Court ruling.

The American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA), when asked by BP for a statement on the Supreme Court ruling, responded via email, "We respect and will continue to respect congregational freedom on this issue knowing that, within our family, we differ, but in love. We will continue to work through the Baptist Joint Committee on Religious Liberty regarding issues related to separation of church and state."

Carmen Fowler LaBerge, president of the conservative Presbyterian Lay Committee (PLC) in Franklin, Tenn., told Baptist Press that mainline congregations and pastors who oppose homosexual marriage become increasingly susceptible to discrimination lawsuits when their parent denominations abandon official endorsements of traditional marriage.

"That legal test is coming for churches that have allowed their sanctuaries and chapels to be used for weddings of non-believers and people of other faith traditions," LaBerge said. "It is going to be very hard for them

to demonstrate a consistently held theological belief based on the Scriptures if they've been willing to perform or host weddings for non-Christians.

"How then will they defend the right to not marry professing Christians of the same gender?"

The mission statement on the PLC web site reads, "The mission of the Presbyterian Lay Committee is to inform and equip Christians to share the Biblical faith by proclaiming Jesus Christ alone as The Way of salvation; The Truth of God's Word; [and] The Life of discipleship."

A release from the United Methodist Church (UMC) stated, "United Methodists had varied reactions to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that establishes same sex civil marriage as a constitutional right. But many United Methodists agree on one thing: The decision likely will escalate a longtime denominational debate on the church's position on homosexuality."

United Methodist clergy are banned from performing same sex weddings, and churches are banned from hosting the weddings, according to the UMC release.

BIBL i O C I P H E R

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RAHVW WPS PGTQ ZPGVW PRWP HSYSJ

EGJZAYSHVV, XKW AV AH ORHZSJ GE

SWSJHRT ORFHRWAGH.

FRJC WPJSS: WLSHWQ-HAHS

Clue: $X = E$

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John 6:45

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)
If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format.

Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.

Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed.

Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Let Them Hear • Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26-29; 3:5, 12, 21

Let me tell you about a kid I once knew. He suffered from hearing loss in both ears as a result from chronic ear infections and scar tissue from repeated surgeries. Consequently, the child required hearing aids. One day, tired of being teased by his classmates the child put the hearing aids in the pocket of his jeans. The teacher noticed the missing hearing aids and inquired of the child if he no longer wore the devices. He replied, "Sure, I still have them. I just keep them in my jeans."

That story is a true one because I was that kid and I was the one who did not realize the foolishness of my actions. I was attempting to avoid ridicule from other children and as a result significantly compromised both my hearing and ability to communicate. I do not share that account with you for sympathy. Later in life, I was able to have additional surgeries to correct my hearing and for that I am deeply thankful. I tell you that story because I believe that many Christians, and as a result; many churches have taken their spiritual hearing aids and put them in their pockets. Sometimes we would rather look like everyone else and fit in than to hear from

the Lord, be obedient and possibly be ridiculed.

Throughout the second and third chapters in the Book of Revelation Jesus repeatedly implored the church to both hear and heed His words. There is much discussion regarding the seven churches and their possible connection with church history. Many believe the seven churches Jesus addresses represent

seven distinct stages in the history of the church. Some teach the different churches indicate a progression of the

Christian response to the mission of Christ. This may very well be true, but do not lose sight of the fact these seven churches were real, literal churches in the Roman province of Asia in John's day. He was recording this section of the Revelation of Jesus with them in mind. However, it should not be lost in your study of this book of the rel-

evance of the messages to the seven churches to us today. The words of Jesus are as applicable and needed now as any time in history.

As you read the letters to the seven churches you should note some common themes and a pattern. The pattern includes: a description of the Sender, a compliment or critique, a call for change and the assurance to

all who persevere. Without a doubt, you will see a glimpse of the modern-day church in some of Jesus' disappoint-

ments and anger with these original churches. What did Jesus find repulsive among these churches? Leaving their first love, tolerance of false doctrine, compromising with the world, corruption, appearing to be alive but really dead, failing to repent and complacency are all examples of activities that Jesus brought to light. Any of

those traits remind you of the church you attend? If so, it is because many within the membership have refused to listen to the words of the Lord and obey His plea to return to Him.

Many wives jokingly say their husbands have "selective hearing," meaning they only hear what they want to. Could we as believers be guilty of selective hearing? As bad as some of the churches were in John's day and as equally bad as some churches are today, there remains hope. As long as we have Jesus we have hope. Take the time to read about these early churches. Some were guilty of gross misconduct. Even the church that made Jesus want to vomit (Laodicea) had hope. Why? Because of His unfailing love for them (Rev. 3:19). The message of Jesus for those in yesteryear is the same one today: listen and repent! When your ears need cleaning out, you may require a doctor. When your spiritual ears need to be opened, clean out your heart! The Lord stands ready to speak, are you listening?

McKay is pastor of Harperville Church, Harperville.

Return to Your First Love • Revelation 2:1-7

Why does love – even the most fervent and committed love – sometimes grow cold over time? In the case of the letters to the Asian churches, and in particular to the church in Ephesus, the rebuke from Jesus that the church had "forsaken your first love" bears pondering, as a warning to both them and us.

What exactly did Jesus mean? For background, see Jeremiah 2:1-2 (HCSB): *The word of the LORD came to me: "Go and announce directly to Jerusalem that this is what the LORD says: I remember the loyalty of your youth, your love as a bride—how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. God obviously places a premium on His relationship with Israel and their faithfulness to Him. See the familiar passage, Matthew 22:37-38, as Jesus replies to an expert in the law who has asked Jesus what might be the greatest commandment: He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. (HCSB). In God's economy, it is all about loving Him and serving Him faithfully.*

The Lord approaches the church in Ephesus first with kind and encouraging words. In verses 2-3, Jesus speaks of how the church was hard-working

and persevering, of how there was no tolerance for wicked men, and how they scrutinized those who might be false teachers. Ephesus was a center of trade and tourism, a large cosmopolitan city. Because of its position as the chief seaport of Asia, and by virtue of it being a major trade route between China and the eastern provinces for goods going to Italy, it had its share of traveling teachers. Some of these teachers would mix just enough Christianity into their esoteric and convoluted preaching and philosophy to make it palatable to the churches – and it's not exactly as though this isn't going on today. The Lord commends the Ephesian church for standing guard against that.

Then the Lord drops the hammer. In verse 4, He accuses the church of "forsaking its first love." The church had been busy, serving sacrificially, standing guard against false doctrine, but it seems that these qualities were not motivated by love but something

else. It's almost as though they were so proud of their devotion through their actions that their works took the place of their intimacy with Christ. What they – and we – do for the Lord is important, but it isn't nearly as important as why we do it, or what motivates us to do it.

This is tough love in action. We all have times when we feel as though we might cave under pressure, and we don't particularly like to hear that things are going to get worse before

they get any better. This is exactly what Christ is doing in this. He confronts them with their moral and spiritual compromise, but He also encourages them.

Here is the "bad news." The church has left its first love. Their first love was devotion to Christ, an earnest, passionate, all-consuming love. Then, as though the church went on autopilot, they go through the motions of "doing church." It had to be sobering for them

to realize that they could work so hard for God and yet neglect their relationship with Him. Labor is no substitute for love. I'm reminded of the gentleman in a church I served years ago – people would say things like "Frank is here every time the church doors are open." That may sound like a virtue – perhaps it is – but Frank was one of the most mean-spirited and ornery men I've ever met. He served hard, all right, but his spirit was barren.

The Lord threatens to remove the church's lampstand – in effect, the church would go dark. What is a church that offers no light to the world around it? Not much. This is severe judgment – God means business.

There is redemption available, however. God said that if the church were to survive, they would have to remember what they had lost, repent from what they had done, and restore the original fellowship broken by sin and neglect.

Certainly this is a warning to us individually as well as to our churches. We can take a thousand steps away from Christ, but it only takes one step to bring us back to Him and to renew that first love.

Martin is Associate Editor of The Baptist Record.

MARINE

cont. from p. 1

For Skip Wells, military service was a part of his family's DNA. His great-grandfather served during World War II, his grandfather was in the Air Force during the Cuban Missile

Crisis, and his father Kip served during Operation Desert Storm. The latter said in a statement to the media.

Skip Wells' influence at First Church Woodstock was recounted prior to a time of prayer Sunday morning. Relaying the words of orchestra director Gary Gaston, Jake Holman of

the church's music staff told the congregation, "Gary said Skip was the kind of young man you could always count on."

Skip "always showed up early and stayed until everyone was gone. He always had his Bible with him when he came to church [and] related well to people of all ages."

Holman then relayed information passed along earlier to Wells' mother, Cathy. Instead of choosing a path of escape, Wells went back to help a friend climb a fence in eluding the shooter.

"In the effort to try and help one of his friends, he lost his own life," Holman told the crowd.

An unnamed policeman who is a member of Bayside Church in Chattanooga was one of three people wounded by the shooter, a radicalized Muslim named Mohammad Youssef Abdulazeez, 24, who was killed by police after murdering the five American servicemen.

LifeWay Research: most agree about 'special relationship'

NASHVILLE (BP) — In a nation founded on religious liberty, most Americans believe God has a special relationship with the United States and they're optimistic the best is yet to come. Despite headlines lamenting the global decline of the United States since the Cold War, 54% of Americans believe the nation is on the upswing, according to a survey by LifeWay Research released July 1.

Only four in 10 think "America's best days are behind us," LifeWay Research reported from data received in the September 2014 survey.

Though the U.S. Constitution makes no mention of God, 53% of Americans say they believe God and the nation have a special relationship — a concept stretching back to Pilgrim days. Even a third of atheists, agnostics, and those with no religious preference believe America has a special relationship with God.

"God Bless America" is more than a song or a prayer for many Americans. It is a belief that God has blessed America beyond what is typical for nations throughout history," said Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research, a division of LifeWay Christians Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention and headquartered in Nashville.

"I am sure that would spawn many theological conversations," Stetzer said, adding that it's important to note a majority of Americans "think God has a special relationship with their country."

Both ends of the political spectrum — from U.S. President Barack Obama to the Republican Party platform — have touted American exceptionalism, the belief that the United States plays a unique role in human history. For some, the concept includes the idea of a special relationship with God, although beliefs about the nature of the relationship vary.

"Some Christians view America as an archetype of biblical Israel, chosen and uniquely blessed by God," Stetzer said. "That's why Christians sometimes speak of God 'healing our land,' when most theologians say this American 'land' is not in the same category as the 'land' of biblical Israel."

Americans have emphatic opinions on the matter, with 35% strongly agreeing God has a special relationship with the United States and 25% strongly disagreeing. Smaller segments say they somewhat agree (19%) or somewhat disagree (13%).

Americans also have a firm belief in the nation's future. In recent years the nation has faced an economic downturn and reports of dwindling political power, academic skills, and moral fiber. Nevertheless, 35% strongly disagree with the statement, "America's best days are behind us," and 20% somewhat disagree. In contrast, just 21% strongly agree and 19% somewhat agree.

Methodology

The phone survey of Americans was conducted Sept. 19-28, 2014. The calling utilized Random Digit Dialing. Sixty percent of completes were among landlines and 40% among cellphones. Maximum quotas and slight weights were used for gender, region, age, ethnicity, and education to more accurately reflect the population. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.4%. Margins of error are higher in subgroups. Those labeled evangelicals consider themselves "born again, evangelical, or fundamentalist Christian."

Optimism for the U.S. is highest among the most highly educated Americans. Only one-quarter of those with a graduate degree believe America's best days are gone, compared to 38% of those with some college and 46% of those with a high school degree or less.

Protestants are more pessimistic about the nation's future than Catholics, with 43% of Protestants agreeing America is past its prime, compared to 34% of Catholics.

Women, meanwhile, are significantly more likely than men to believe that God has a special relationship with the United States. While 49% of men have that view, the number rises to 58% for women.

LifeWay Research also found differences by age, race, geography, education, and religious preference.

Sixty-three percent of Americans ages 45-54 think God has a special relationship with the United States, a belief shared by 48% of those 18-44.

Belief in a special relationship is also high among:

- African Americans, at 62%, compared to whites at 51%.

- Southerners, at 59%, compared to 49% of Midwesterners and 50% of Westerners.

- Those with a high school degree or less, at 66%. For those with some college, the rate drops to 51%. It drops further to 40% of those with a bachelor's degree and 29% of those with a graduate degree.

Evangelical Christians are the most likely to believe in a special relationship, with 67% agreeing. Among evangelicals 45 and older, the share soars to 71%.

"Americans, particularly those in more religious segments or geography, are most likely to believe in this special relationship but, considering the history of the nation from Manifest Destiny to Ronald Reagan's 'City on a Hill' speech, it's not surprising this long-held theme continues today," Stetzer said.

AMONG AMERICANS:

"God has a special relationship with the USA."

38%
Disagree

53%
Agree

8% Not Sure

Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

LifeWay Research

AMONG AMERICANS:

"America's best days are behind us."

54%
Disagree

40%
Agree

6% Not Sure

LifeWay Research